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SPORTS, 1B

VENTURA COUNTY STAR

FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2024

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

New rules take aim at loopholes

At least 20K more gun sellers will be required to do background checks

Nick Penzenstadler
USA TODAY

The Biden administration will take steps this week to crack down on unlicensed dealers selling firearms that bleed into the illegal market.

Under current rules, licensed dealers must perform background checks and log the make, model and serial numbers of guns sold, but hobbyists and infrequent traders don't. Justice officials say too many guns are being sold under what are often referred to as gun show and internet

loopholes.

New regulations – part of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act signed in 2022 and an executive order last year – will more clearly define which sellers are “engaged in the business” and thus need to join the 80,000 other federal firearms

licensees required by law to perform background checks.

The new rules will take effect 30 days after being published in the Federal Register, Justice officials told reporters this week.

The expected result: At least 20,000 additional gun sellers will be required to

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Sandy Araiza of Santa Paula thanks Ventura County Supervisor Vianey Lopez during Food Share's weekly drive-through food pantry at College Park in Oxnard on Wednesday. ANTHONY PLASCENCIA/THE STAR

Food Share drive-through at Oxnard park reaches milestone

Brian J. Varela Ventura County Star | USA TODAY NETWORK

Boxes of pork tenderloin and green apples waited under canopies as hundreds of vehicles lined up for free groceries at Oxnard's College Park on Wednesday.

About 70 volunteers with the nonprofit Food Share milled around the moving traffic, putting boxes in trunks and back seats — a remnant from the pandemic — while grateful drivers shouted thanks.

“There’s a lot of people here who need a lot of help,” said Pat Hart, an 81-year-old volunteer who has helped pack boxes and distribute food for three and a half years.

April 1 marked the four-year anniversary the Oxnard-

based food bank has distributed fresh meat, produce and other ingredients to hungry Ventura County residents at the park.

In the last four years, Food Share has distributed 500,000 emergency food boxes at the site, said Monica White, the nonprofit's CEO. Those supplies have reached hundreds of thousands of county residents, she said.

It began as a drive-through food pantry as the county reeled from orders to stay home at the onset of the pandemic.

See **FOOD**, Page 2A

Supervisors OK polling voters about housing bond

Cheri Carlson
Ventura County Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

Ventura County officials this week took a step toward asking voters to consider a special tax to create more affordable housing.

Supervisors Vianey Lopez and Matt LaVere proposed hiring an Oakland polling firm to survey residents to see what they think about a local housing bond. The county's lack of affordable housing has reached a crisis level, LaVere said Tuesday.

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OJ Simpson dies at 76

INSIDE, 5A

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Housing

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"I think both of us agree that we're in a crisis moment right now in Ventura County when it comes to affordable housing," he said. "We're interested in taking this step to see if the community agrees with us."

The Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to hire EMC Research to conduct the poll at a cost of up to \$75,000. Results are expected to return to the board in May.

What would a ballot measure seek?

Details of a potential bond measure, including the type of tax or costs, are not yet clear. They are expected after the polling and if the board decides to move forward. Initial plans suggested a parcel tax, officials said.

The poll is expected to survey the community to understand potential voter support for a bond and priorities for how to use proceeds such as supporting first-time homebuyers or addressing homelessness.

Local officials have received federal and state funds for affordable housing in recent years. But state grants are becoming increasingly competitive and could face cuts given California's budget deficit, officials said.

Meanwhile, the county recently became the least affordable metropolitan area in the United States for homebuyers, according to data from the National Association of Realtors included in a recent report from the Center for Economic Research and Forecasting at the California Lutheran University.

What is the next step?

Representatives from the Ventura County Housing Coalition urged supervisors to move forward to address the

Survey results are expected to be presented to the board in May, Lopez said Tuesday. If the board decides to move forward, supervisors then would be asked to consider details of the bond measure no later than June 18. The timing would allow the county to meet the deadline to place a measure on the November ballot, Lopez said.

need for housing. A local funding source could leverage other available money, they said.

Ryan Grau with the Ventura County Taxpayers Association spoke against the move Tuesday, saying the proposal lacked specifics and costs. It appears the survey will ask taxpayers how much they are willing to pay, he said. If the board decides to move forward, he asked supervisors to base any measure on estimates of how much is needed and not how much people are willing to pay.

Supervisor Janice Parvin supported a survey but said she had concerns about the timing for a bond measure given the rising costs already facing residents from groceries to home insurance. LaVeré called those valid concerns and one of the reasons for the poll to ask residents what they think.

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Cheri Carlson covers the environment and county government for the Ventura County Star. Reach her at cheri.carlson@vcstar.com or 805-437-0260.



New regulations will more clearly define which sellers are "engaged in the business" and thus need to join the 80,000 other federal firearms licensees required by law to perform background checks. JONATHAN ERNST/REUTERS FILE

Guns

Continued from Page 1A

perform the instant background checks that will stop them from selling to felons, domestic abusers and other prohibited buyers.

Who is now required to do a background check?

While the rules for gun dealers have always applied to those who are "engaged in the business," the question has been what that phrase means.

The former standard defined a dealer as someone who sold for "profit and livelihood." Gun control groups and Democrats have called for the government to define "engaged in the business" by the number of sales, such as five in a year.

Instead, the new standard settles on drawing the line at those who sell "predominantly to earn a profit," and it provides key indicators. If a gun seller uses merchant services like a credit card machine, or frequently rents space at a gun show, or repetitively acquires and sells firearms, that person is considered a dealer — and must now do background checks.

Exceptions include bona fide collectors selling some of their inventory, guns given as gifts to family members, and personal sales tied to a hobby like hunting or sport shooting.

Some oppose new rules on firearm dealers

The agency said it has reviewed nearly 388,000 comments, mostly in favor of the proposal, since the proposed rule was published in August.

"It's a false choice that you have to be in favor of the Second Amendment or in favor of taking your guns away," Vice President Kamala Harris told reporters Wednesday.

The new rules come just before the April 20, 1999, of the school shooting at

Last week, the ATF issued a firearm trafficking report that showed more than 68,000 guns came through unlicensed dealers over a five-year period. They represented more than half of the illegally trafficked guns nationwide and were tied to 368 shooting cases, Dettelbach said.

Colorado's Columbine High School. In that case, the two shooters purchased firearms from private individuals without a background check. Several of the firearms used were sold by an unlicensed seller at a gun show five months before the massacre.

"This doesn't infringe on your Second Amendment rights," ATF Director Steve Dettelbach told reporters this week. "Licensed dealers are already playing by the rules. They keep transaction records, they use serial numbers, they work with the ATF to report suspicious activity."

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Some gun industry groups opposed the new regulation. The National Shooting Sports Foundation said the rule was an overreach and submitted a 28-page comment in opposition.

"ATF has no authority to 'improve' on what Congress enacted or to create new crimes not enacted by Congress," Larry Keane, NSSF's senior vice president wrote. "An agency may not re-write statutory terms or fill in what the agency considers to be 'gaps' or 'loopholes' in the statute."

But gun violence prevention groups cheered the action.

"Expanding background checks and closing the gun seller loophole is a massive victory for safer communities," said Angela Ferrell-Zabala, executive director of Moms Demand Action.

Fangtastic

Continued from Page 3A

macher directed the film. Corey Haim, Jason Patric, Corey Feldman, Jamison Newlander, Kiefer Sutherland and Jami Gertz star in a story about a fictional California town where teenagers find vampires in their midst.

On Saturday, "Twilight" will show. Kristen Stewart stars as a high school student who moves to the Pacific Northwest and falls in love with a 108-year-old vampire played by Robert Pattinson, whose undead friends age well and even sparkle in the 2008 movie shot in Washington's forested Olympic Peninsula.

Sunday's offering features the 1931 black-and-white classic "Dracula." Bela Lugosi stars as the famous count and commands the screen in sinister close-ups.

More terror will come Monday with "From Dusk to Dawn," the 1996 film starring George Clooney and Quentin Tarantino as bank robbers. After a heist, they pick up hostages and cross into Mexico, then visit a bar where people

turn into vampires. Tarantino co-wrote the movie.

"Interview With The Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles" will land Tuesday. Brad Pitt stars as Louis, a vampire who tells his epic life story to a reporter played by Christian Slater. The 1994 film is based on Anne Rice's novel of the same name. Tom Cruise plays Lestat, the vampire who turns Louis into a creature of the night in the tale set in New Orleans.

The series closes with the action-packed "Blade" on Wednesday. Wesley Snipes stars in the title role as a half-vampire, half-mortal man who fights evil vampires in the 1998 thriller.

On April 18, the new movie "Abigail" will bring its horror to theaters around the country. Alisha Weir plays Abigail, a ballerina daughter captured by criminals. They take her to a mansion, where they learn — to their horror — she's a vampire.

For more information, go to www.cinemark.com.

Dave Mason covers East County for the Ventura County Star. He can be reached at dave.mason@vcstar.com or 805-437-0232.

Golf

Continued from Page 3A

their applause.

Ted Alan, a member of senior golf clubs at both courses, told city leaders the massive flooding damage to Buenaventura Golf Course is not likely to happen again. He blamed much of it on debris and other materials that plugged a roadway overpass near the course during the Jan. 9, 2023 rainstorm. He noted the course has drained exceptionally well in the string of storms that has doused the county this year.

"What happened on Jan. 9 was a phenomenon," he said.

Others called for improvements to infrastructure at the courses, including more maintenance and better storage facilities to protect city investments in golf carts. Kevin Rennie, once Ventura's city fire chief and now a golfer who plays on courses across the state, said the council needs at least a five-year strategy.

"You possess two of the best golf courses. The amenities are terrible," he said, referring to the modular buildings at Olivas. "These are supposed to be for six months. It's been 18 years."

Because the protests came during public comments, city council members could not react or debate the issues. But Mayor Joe Schroeder noted he and City Manager Bill Ayub have met with the golfers.

"We heard what you have to say,"



Buenaventura Golf Course in Ventura has been closed for more than a year. Its future remains uncertain but could include a partial reopening.

TOM KISKEN/THE STAR

Schroeder said. "The facilities need to get better."

The biggest uncertainties surround Buenaventura Golf Course, the course that opened in 1932 and has gained a following of older, inexperienced and youth golfers because of its shorter, more forgiving design. The damage from the flooding would take more than \$10 million to repair.

The price is far more than the city can pay on its own. It is seeking help from

insurance as well as state and federal agencies.

"We're still in negotiations with FEMA," Deputy City Manager Brad "Brick" Conners said Wednesday. "Nothing has been approved."

City officials worry the flooding could happen again unless they take steps to reduce the risks.

"Any investment would be potentially wasteful and probably uninsurable unless the course was properly protect-

ed from future flood events," Conners said in an email.

Steps aimed at reducing the chances of future course damage from flooding appear to be possible. A drainage study and an architect design plan are in the early stages. Then the city could submit a final funding application to FEMA, ushering in a review stage that could take up to six months.

The process will also involve input from the golf community, Conners said. Several of the golfers at the podium focused on the revenue golf generated for the city, about \$6 million annually before the flood. That amount fell sharply because of Buenaventura's closure and the golfers contended more investment in the courses would boost profits.

City officials want to recoup lost revenue, too. Conners said it's possible the closed 18-hole course could temporarily reopen by the end of June with a 9- or 10-hole layout.

"We think this is a workable, temporary solution, but the details are still being flushed out," he said.

Some of the golfers worried the city might permanently settle for a partial opening of the course. Others want the opening to happen quickly but are concerned about the lack of details provided.

"Something is better than nothing," said Todd Stork, a member of the Buenaventura Senior Men's Golf Club. "Our members need hope."

Tom Kisken covers health care and other news for the Ventura County Star. Reach him at tom.kisken@vcstar.com.